



# General Treatment Guidelines

The information that you find here is to help you to know what to expect during your treatment. It also helps you to learn ways to deal with any side effects that you may have. Please ask a member of the team (doctor, nurse, technologist and nutritionist) to answer any of your questions.

## Introduction

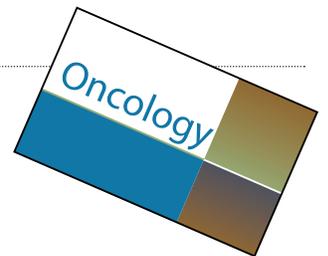
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Radiation therapy side effects vary from person to person. The side effects depend on several things such as the area of the body to be treated, the type of radiation used, the amount of radiation, whether you are having chemotherapy at the same time and your general health.

## Oncology Passport

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This is your tool to write information and keep track about your diagnosis, treatment, possible symptoms and resources. Please bring it with you everyday.



## Possible side effects

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- The radiation oncologist or resident will see you on a weekly basis to assess for side effects or symptoms.
- The radiation oncologist may prescribe a medication to relieve any side effects or symptoms you might develop.
- If a side effect or symptom appears in between the weekly visits it is important to tell one of your team members.

## Will the radiation therapy affect my skin?

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- When radiation is given it passes through your skin to reach the area to be treated. Skin problems are an expected side effect for people who receive radiation therapy. Your skin might become dry, itchy, red or darker in color.
- Skin reactions to radiation occur within the treatment field and begin to appear after 2 to 4 weeks.
- Advise the technologist if you notice any skin itching, tenderness, redness or breakdown.

## How should I care for my skin during treatment?

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- Take quick showers or baths.
- Lather your hands with soap and apply gently to your skin.
- Wash the skin gently with lukewarm water and mild unscented soap such as Ivory® or Dove®.
- Rinse your skin well and pat dry with a soft towel.
- Discuss the use of unscented hydrating creams with your technologist, nurse or doctor during treatment.
- Do not apply cream or lotion on skin even if the doctor prescribed it for at least 4 hours before treatment.
- Inform your technologist, nurse or doctor if your skin begins to peel, ooze or feels irritated. You may receive a prescription for another type of skin cream.
- Protect treated skin from winter, wind and cold.
- Always protect treated skin from the sun by covering up.
- After treatment ends, continue to protect skin and wear sunscreen SPF 30 or higher when outdoors.



## What should I avoid doing to my skin during treatment?

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- Do not wash off the skin markings.
- Do not use tape on the area of body treated.
- Do not rub, scrub or scratch your skin.
- Avoid use of heating pads, hot water bottles, hot tubs, or ice packs.
- Avoid tight, restrictive clothing.

## Will I feel tired?

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- Fatigue or a feeling of tiredness is a common side effect.
- Energy levels increase gradually after the treatment ends.
- If you are tired, then take naps or rest periods as needed.
- Continue your regular activities but limit yourself when you feel tired. Listen to your body.
- Have a friend or family member come with you for support and to assist with driving and daily activities.
- Mild physical activity such as walking is encouraged and may be helpful to fight fatigue.
- Fatigue is also common among persons who are depressed or have difficulty to cope. Talk to your treatment team.

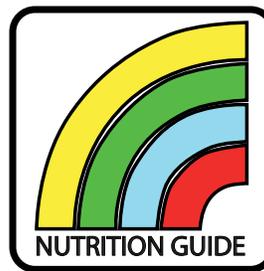
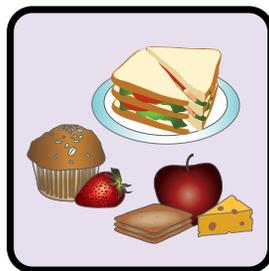


## What about my nutrition?

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Radiation or chemotherapy may change how food tastes, may cause loss of appetite, or cause nausea.

- Eat balanced healthy meals to help improve and maintain energy and strength
- Eat smaller and more frequent meals
- Do not attempt to lose weight during treatment since nutrition is important for healing
- You may need an appointment with the nutritionist during your treatments



## What can I do if I feel overwhelmed?

- Feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, or of difficulty to cope are normal. Each person has a different way of dealing with difficult situations. Tell the team if you are having any of these feelings.
- We can offer you counseling with our Psychosocial Oncology Program.
- We can also offer information and/or referral for support, such as Can Support at MUHC or community based self-help groups.

## Where can I get information on the Internet?

Not all information found on the Internet is accurate or reliable. If you have access to the Internet and you would like more information on your cancer or its treatment, you can visit these reliable websites:

[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) - Canadian Cancer Society

[www.fqc.qc.ca](http://www.fqc.qc.ca) - Fondation Québécoise du Cancer

[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net) - American Society of Clinical Oncology

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) - National Cancer Institute



## What should I do if I feel very sick or if there is an emergency?

Should you experience any serious reactions that are causing you to worry, please call your doctor or nurse

- Weekdays - tel: 514-934-1934 ext. 43400.
- At night or during the weekend: call the MUHC switchboard - tel: 514- 934-1934 and ask for the Radiation Oncology Resident on Call.
- If your symptoms are particularly severe or you are unable to reach the Radiation Oncologist you should go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.

### IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

**Information provided by pamphlet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.**

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